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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7273

INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0923

RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1694

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RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 000238

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/S, EEB/ESC, ISN

DOE FOR M. SCOTT, T.SPERL, G.PERSON, A.BIENAWSKI, L.PARKER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ENRG](#) [TRGY](#) [KNNP](#) [PREL](#) [BEXP](#) [IAEA](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: SAG READY TO SIGN AGREEMENT ON NUCLEAR COOPERATION

REF: A. PRETORIA 215

[1B](#). PRETORIA 173

[1C](#). PRETORIA 103

[1D](#). 08 PRETORIA 2165 AND PREVIOUS

[1E](#). UDDIN-PARKER E-MAIL 05 FEBRUARY

[1F](#). STATE 6083

[11](#). (SBU) South Africa is ready to sign the Agreement on Cooperation in Research and Development of Nuclear Energy. The SAG would like to sign this agreement at the Ministerial level and implement it as a "living" and broad agreement. The SAG will follow the USG lead on whether it is signed by the Secretary of Energy or State. The SAG is eager to launch a related Joint Standing Committee on Nuclear Energy Cooperation. South Africa is open to using the agreement and the coordinating committee as an opportunity for broader discussions on nuclear energy, fuel cycle, and even non-proliferation topics. Meanwhile, other bilateral initiatives, like return of HEU spent fuel, Megaports, and WMD Commodities Identification Training are proceeding. End Summary.

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Signing the Bilateral Agreement  
on Cooperation in R&D of Nuclear Energy  
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[12](#). (SBU) Department of Foreign Affairs Deputy Director Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Michiel Combrink informed Energy Officer on February 5 that the SAG is ready to sign the long-awaited bilateral Agreement on Cooperation in R&D in Nuclear Energy (reflets), based on securing approval from the President's office. Combrink said the agreement was "in binding", which is a purely mechanical step. (He emphasized that if the Ministers happened to be meeting soon, the SAG was fully ready to sign.) Combrink repeated the SAG's desire that the agreement be signed at the Minister level. Embassy supports this position. The signing of the agreement will be an opportunity to gauge and advance other bilateral energy initiatives, both nuclear and non-nuclear. In addition, the two sides can lay out a clear road-map for fruitful implementation of the agreement, including discussing launching a related Joint Standing Committee on Nuclear Energy Cooperation (JSCNEC). Combrink said the SAG would be open to the agreement and an associated joint committee serving as vehicles for discussing broader issues such as fuel cycle issues of enrichment and reprocessing. In addition, even wider non-proliferation

issues covered under the IAEA Nuclear Suppliers Group and the NPT, for example, could be discussed, if mutually desired. Combrink said that the Department of Minerals and Energy would be the logical implementing partner for the agreement, but the Department of Foreign Affairs would follow the lead of the U.S. Department of State in determining level of involvement - and potential signing.

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Other Cooperation Initiatives  
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13. (SBU) DOE OFFER ON SECURITY ASSISTANCE: Energy Officer used the meeting to touch on a range of nuclear energy cooperation initiatives. Combrink said that the recent offer of assistance from the U.S. DOE for enhancing security at nuclear and radiological sites (Ref F) was being evaluated by a SAG inter-agency process. He could not comment on the Qa SAG inter-agency process. He could not comment on the timing of a response. (Note: Combrink expressed disappointment with the U.S. Nuclear Threat Initiative report that highlighted the 2007 Pelindaba security incident (Ref B) and claimed that the SAG had refused an offer of U.S. assistance, without any specific description of the assistance referred to. End Note.)

14. (SBU) RETURN OF SPENT FUEL: The SAG cabinet recently approved the joint feasibility study for return of U.S.-origin highly enriched uranium spent fuel (Ref C). DOE plans to send a technical team on March 10-11 and Energy Officer will participate in these meetings.

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15. (SBU) COMMODITY IDENTIFICATION TRAINING: Combrink and Department of Trade and Industry Director Non-Proliferation Daan Van Beek said the SAG would like to advance the WMD Commodities Identification Training (CIT) initiative, building on South Africa's participation in the December 2007 U.S.-Argentina workshop (Ref e-mail). Combrink proposed that the initiative proceed on a bilateral basis and requested that DOE schedule sending a team to meet with appropriate South African agencies to determine next steps and appropriate point of contact. They noted that many SAG procedures and training were already on par or more advanced than those presented in the workshop, but the SAG customs office could clearly benefit from the CIT, particularly with respect to select source material, training of trainers experience, and web-based programs.

16. (SBU) MEGAPORTS AND MORE: Transport Officer said that she and the DHS representative were arranging a meeting with the South African Revenue Service (SARS) point of contact to advance the Megaports initiative targeted for the Port of Durban. Combrink said he hoped that the new Secretary of Energy and his staff would be interested in other opportunities for cooperation outside the nuclear arena, such as solar energy, other aspects of renewable energy, clean coal technology, and energy efficiency.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: The length of time to move these long percolating nuclear cooperation initiatives has been frustrating, but securing Presidential approval of the bilateral cooperation agreement is a critical step. Embassy would like to respond as soon as possible on signing modalities and planning for fruitful implementation. DOE can confirm SAG's readiness to sign and implement the agreement with DFA Deputy Director Michiel Combrink ( 27 12 351 1584; combrinkmj@foreign.gov.za) if that is useful, keeping Embassy involved and informed. After appropriate high-level signing is arranged, both sides can identify a functional point of contact at the respective energy ministries.

LA LIME